

Advance the revolution on all fronts!

Unbridled imperialist plunder and the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's utter puppetry, brutality and corruption have spawned an unusually severe socio-economic crisis and the unprecedented exacerbation of the living conditions of the broad masses.

The severity of the current economic and political crisis is almost akin to the gravity of the crisis during the Marcos period. It is set to worsen in the coming years due to Macapagal-Arroyo's all-out puppetry to US imperialism, her regime's utterly brutal terrorism and intense graft and corruption especially of the Arroyo couple and persons close to them.

The economy is set to plummet even more in 2003. The budget deficit, external debts, the devaluation of the peso and unemployment are expected to reach unprecedented levels. Government funds and foreign investments are woefully inadequate. In her desperation, Macapagal-Arroyo could think of no other way out but to condemn the government to further indebtedness and impose more taxes on the people.

The people live in abject poverty due to the policies of liberalization, deregulation,

privatization, denationalization and other IMF dictates. Production has slumped. The army of the unemployed continues to grow. Wages are extremely low. Farmers are bankrupt and up to their necks in debt. Local businessmen are in dire straits. Despite all this, Arroyo has persisted in enforcing such policies.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime supposedly plans to modernize agriculture. In fact, farms will be converted to large plantations of non-traditional export crops heavily reliant on imported chemical inputs. This will only make the Philippines even more dependent on the importation of rice and other food products.

Macapagal-Arroyo's puppetry to US imperialism knows no bounds. She does everything to please her master, who is the world's foremost terrorist. She has recently reinforced the country's status as a vast US military base with the signing of the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA). Beginning January 2003, the country will be swamped by a huge number of American troops, the largest since the US military bases were booted out in 1991. The US plans to use the Philippines as



launching ground for its impending war of aggression against Iraq.

Broad sections of the people and even Macapagal-Arroyo's allies strongly object to such policies. She is severely isolated politically and the ruling system is now mired in grave crisis, comparable to that which existed before the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship.

To cover up the intense economic and political crisis and arbitrarily impose even more detrimental policies on the people, Macapagal-Arroyo, together with her master George Bush, has been sowing an anti-terrorist hysteria. They have been using the "terrorist threat" as a pretext to suppress the people's resistance, launch an all-out

terrorist war against the people and the New People's Army (NPA), open the doors to even more intense US imperialist military intervention and run roughshod on the peace talks.

This has so far been the clearest manifestation of the regime's militarism, its rabid reactionary character and brazen puppetry. Also in the name of anti-terrorism, the US has arrogantly been throwing its weight around as the sole superpower, coercing countries especially in the Asia-Pacific to adhere to its "anti-terrorist agenda," intensified warmongering and intervention. The imperialist terrorism of Bush and that of Macapagal-Arroyo are far more extensive, more evil and more devastating than the terrorism of the al Qaida and Osama bin Laden.

Worldwide, oppressed peoples and countries are beset with graver unrest and suffering due to imperialist war and aggression and the acute crisis of capitalism.

ACTUALLY, BUSH AND HIS PHILIPPINE PUPPET'S heightened bullying stance mark their intensifying anxieties over the explosive problems and crises of imperialism and reaction.

Developments have run contrary to Bush and Macapagal-Arroyo's desire of seeing the revolutionary movement's isolation and decline due to its having been declared as "terrorist." The revolutionary movement has heightened its resolve to defend its integrity against US imperialism and the puppet Macapagal-Arroyo regime's moves to malign and disparage it.

Overseas the resurgence and renewed expansion of economic struggles, anti-war struggles and other people's struggles are praiseworthy, and further shake the capitalist system and portend the emergence and resurgence of the international proletarian movement.

THE PAST THREE YEARS HAVE SEEN THE SIGNIFICANT continued resurgence of the revolutionary movement on the basis of the victories of the Second Great Rectification Movement in 1992-1998. The Party and the revolutionary movement have fully recovered from major losses and setbacks. As the Party advances, it consciously adheres to the lessons of the rectification movement in order to avoid deviating once more from the correct line.

The present size of the organized mass base as well as the number of barrios and towns covered and the numerical strength of the Party almost equal if not surpass the peak reached during the 1980s. Guerrilla fronts, now numbering more than 120 and well-positioned in almost all regions and in the majority of provinces are continuously expanding and consolidating.

The overall plan of the Party and the revolutionary movement at present is to further intensify the struggle against the reactionary, puppet, repressive and rotten Macapagal-Arroyo ruling regime and its master, US imperialism, which relentlessly exploits the country and intervenes in its affairs.

The Party and the revolutionary forces are ready and well-positioned to further strengthen the mass base, the NPA, the Party and the united front in the countryside and cities all-sidedly in all regions, and to further hasten the advance of the major arenas of struggle.

The Party and the revolutionary movement will



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continue giving the highest premium to strengthening the organizations and struggles of the worker and peasant masses and other poor sectors in the countryside and cities.

Among these are:

- 1) antifeudal campaigns in the countryside along with other campaigns against the onslaught of imperialist "globalization" on agriculture;

- 2) workers' struggles for a living wage and against exploitation and the severe repression of their democratic rights by the fascist state;

- 3) livelihood and political campaigns of the millions of the people in the countryside and cities who are unemployed or who lack employment and the thousands who swell the ranks of the unemployed daily due to the grave crisis; and

- 4) struggles of employees and small entrepreneurs who have been seriously affected or are in danger of going bankrupt due to the crisis.

The CPP will also support all local businesses, especially the middle bourgeoisie who are now increasingly opposed to and taking action against the onslaught of "free market globalization."

Next year and in the years to come, we expect the NPA and its military offensives to further intensify after having resolved the problems that hindered the more rapid advance of the armed revolutionary movement. As shown in the last half of 2002, tactical offensives are determinedly and steadily being intensified. There is an urgent demand from the

peasant masses and other poor sectors to intensify the revolutionary struggle, both armed and unarmed.

There will be more numerous, more frequent and more widespread tactical offensives against AFP and PNP units and paramilitary forces who have perpetrated the most serious abuses against the people. The worst elements among those who exploit the poor and ordinary folk, who cause the people to suffer and suppress them will likewise be targeted.

The intensification of armed revolution and the various forms of people's revolutionary struggles is the just and correct response to unbridled imperialist and fascist terrorism, imperialist intervention and the merciless exploitation of the masses of the people.

We are now forming the broadest unity of all progressive and democratic forces in the face of the terribly severe crisis and onslaught of imperialism and reaction. We affirm our readiness to unite with all sincere forces and elements that oppose and resist the onslaught of imperialist globalization, imperialist intervention and aggression, fascism and corruption in the government.

We foresee an extremely severe crisis in the country this 2003 and in the coming years, and that imperialist plunder and reaction will become more brutal and relentless. But we are likewise confident that people's struggles will be more widespread and intensified. The Bush-Macapagal-Arroyo cabal will quickly reap the whirlwind born of the evil they have sown. **AB**

Revolutionary taxation

A legitimate act of governance

There is one revolutionary activity that the reactionary government feels acutely-and that is the imposition and collection of taxes on big foreign and comprador capitalist interests operating in areas covered by the revolutionary movement. The imposition of revolutionary taxes proves that the people's democratic government effectively exists and governs over vast territories within the ambit of the revolutionary movement. By observing revolutionary laws on taxation, taxpayers recognize Red political power. The growing collection of revolutionary taxes also demonstrates the revolutionary movement's

capacity for self-reliance as well as its growing strength.

With the reactionary state and the ruling classes raging against revolutionary taxation, the latter is one of subjects constantly targeted by their dirty propaganda and slander.

Revolutionary taxation is not extortion nor is it a terrorist activity, as the reactionary US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime constantly claims. It is a legitimate act and a right of the state of the people's democratic government. It is carried out wherever Red political

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power exists or can be made to exist. Revolutionary taxes on class enemies are legitimate payment for privileges or concessions granted to them to conduct business or operate within the territories of the people's government. Along with the paying of taxes comes compliance with the laws of the people's government and rules of the revolutionary movement, which are all geared towards protecting the people's interest. The NPA is the principal revolutionary organization tasked with implementing taxation. Part of this responsibility is meting punishment on class enemies who refuse to pay taxes.

There are also nationalist businessmen, enlightened landlords and rich peasants—friends of the revolution—who are ready to pay taxes to the revolutionary government. For them, paying taxes is an expression of their support for the revolutionary movement and the general welfare of the people. Unlike the ruling classes, the movement does not employ force in implementing revolutionary taxation on friends of the revolution.

The money and resources collected from

revolutionary taxation are used to defray the operations of the Party, the NPA, the people's democratic government and the revolutionary movement as well as projects for the general welfare of the people.

In implementing revolutionary taxation, the interest and welfare of the people are never compromised. Businesses and properties that are detrimental to the people and the environment are prohibited, no matter their owners' willingness to pay revolutionary taxes.

There is a world of difference between revolutionary taxation and the taxation imposed by the reactionary government. In general, the latter comes from workers, peasants, low level employees and other ordinary citizens. A big portion (about one-fourth) goes to the pockets of government officials apart from a large chunk that goes to debt service, huge military and police expenditures, the suppression of the people and the promotion of imperialist and comprador-bureaucrat capitalist interests. **AB**



VICTORIOUS NPA OFFENSIVES

NPA demolishes FM bust

The people and the entire revolutionary movement hailed the destruction of the gigantic Marcos bust by operatives of the NPA Chadli Molintas Command (CMC) in Tuba, Benguet on December 29.

In a statement, the CMC said that the bust "was a monument to a dictator's absolute arrogance and egotism. It is a blight upon a land that is the ancestral home of the Ibaloi people and a grim reminder of the monstrous crimes that the Marcoses have committed against the people." The Ibaloi have long resisted the construction of the bust because they were forcibly evacuated from their land when the monument was built in the early 1980s.

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal hailed the demolition of the bust. In a statement, he said the destruction of the Marcos bust is an indication that victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship have not been served justice and "the oppressed people and victims of Marcos' only recourse is to turn to the revolutionary movement." Ka Roger emphasized that the directive of the CPP Central Committee issued in 1999 on the "arrest, trial and punishment of the principal implementors and beneficiaries of martial law" remains in force.

Guerrillas raid PA camp in Surigao del Norte

NPA guerrillas successfully raided the camp of the abusive 20th IB in Barangay Ombong, Alegria, Surigao del Norte on December 19. A sergeant and a CAFGU element were wounded in the 15-minute firefight. The abusive and notorious soldiers of the 20th IB had long been the subject of complaints by lumad and officials of nearby Las Nieves town.

Meanwhile, a Philippine Navy officer was divested of his .45 caliber pistol on December 20. Lt. Christopher Salimbangon was caught flatfooted by a three-member unit of the NPA in Sitio Dalaw-an, Barangay Rizal, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte. Seized from him aside from his weapons were his cell phone and night vision goggles.

see "Victorious", page 5



Colonel wounded in South Cotabato ambush

A commander of the Philippine Army and three soldiers were wounded in an NPA ambush in Sitio Salapidan, Barangay Palian, Tupi, South Cotabato on January 4. Troops of the 27th IB, under the command of Lt. Col. Eduardo Laden were on patrol when they were ambushed. The detachment of the Philippine National Police is only about three kilometers from the ambush site.

9 rifles seized in Davao Oriental raid

Nine rifles were confiscated in a raid on the office of the Civil Security Unit (CSU) in Mati, Davao Oriental at dawn on December 29. The raid was executed by the NPA without firing a single shot. Confiscated were two M14s, three M16s, a carbine, a garand and two shotguns. The office of the CSU, located at the Davao Oriental provincial capitol, is only 200 meters from the headquarters of the Philippine Army 4th Special Forces and 300 meters from the Mati PNP station.

9 firearms seized in 2 offensives in Central Visayas

Seven enemy forces were killed and nine high-powered firearms were seized by the NPA in separate offensives launched against fascist military troops and CAFGU elements in Cebu and Bohol in December.

The NPA guerrillas confiscated four M14s, one M203 grenade launcher, one M16 and all ammunition in a raid on the 78th IB's mobile detachment in Sitio Siotes, Barangay Caurasan, Carmen, Cebu on December 12. Four soldiers died while one was wounded in the firefight that lasted for half an hour.

Meanwhile, two M14s and one M16 were seized by Red fighters when they ambushed elements of the 15th IB and the CAFGU in Sitio Fatima, Barangay Taming, Danao, Bohol on December 9. Three CAFGU elements were killed in the first volley of fire.

Soldiers ambushed in Samar

Two soldiers were killed and three were wounded, including Lt. Reran Ante, when they were ambushed by the NPA on the morning of December 29 in Sitio Hebabaugan, Barangay Washington, Catarman, Northern Samar. The troops belonging to the 63rd IB were riding in a Kennedy-type jeep when a landmine was detonated by Red fighters under the NPA Sergio Lobina Command.

RPA, 12th IB suffer losses in Panay

An element of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) bandit group was wounded when their team was sniped by the NPA in Barangay Tacoyong Norte, Leon, Iloilo on December 6.

Earlier, a sergeant of the 12th IB was killed and another was wounded in a failed military operation against the NPA on November 29 in Barangay Sta. Carmen, Dumalag, Capiz. There was no casualty on the NPA side.

Notorious mayor punished

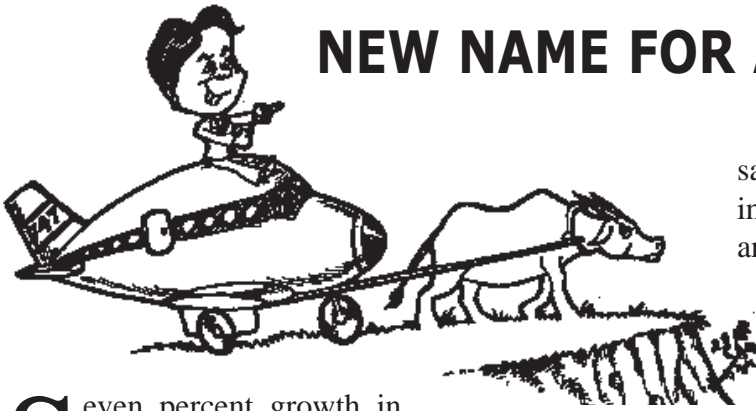
Partisans from the Pulang Diwata Command of the New People's Army in Northeast Mindanao meted punishment on Victor Elipe, antipeople and counter-revolutionary mayor of Tagana-an, Surigao del Norte on December 19.

His case was reviewed by the people's court up to the regional level for a year before he was meted the death penalty.

Among the charges filed against him were landgrabbing, harassment of his political opponents, rape and sexual harassment.

The NPA apologized to the families of the two local officials who were wounded during the firefight between the partisans and Elipe's bodyguards.

NEW NAME FOR AN OLD GIMMICK



Seven percent growth in seven years starting mid-2003. Thus ran the newest slogan of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime as it adopted the socio-economic program popularized by House Speaker Jose de Venecia in 2001. De Venecia inserted the number "4" since it was his intention then to run for the presidential elections in 2004—thus the name "Plan 747". Macapagal-Arroyo has now appropriated Plan 747, hoping to use its results as capital to revive her sagging popularity.

Apart from the gimmick-laden title, Plan 747 is no different from the Ramos regime's Philippines 2000 (or the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan) that was likewise zealously promoted by Macapagal-Arroyo. Both are focused on fully opening the economy to imperialist "globalization". Like Philippines 2000, Plan 747 espouses liberalization, privatization, deregulation and the denationalization of the national economy. As can be expected from the publicity-hungry De Venecia, Plan 747 contains nothing but a number of selected impact projects and programs that will be used to maximum effect for self-serving reasons and to court the people's votes.

Plan 747 purportedly shifts the economic policies of the government from "macroeconomics" to "microeconomics." Instead of concentrating on general economic policies in upholding neoliberalism, Plan 747 intends to promote and actually implement selected key projects. Accordingly, Macapagal-Arroyo booted out National Economic Development Authority secretary general Dante Canlas due to his supposed inutility to reverse the negative trend in the economy in the past two years. In his place, Macapagal-Arroyo appointed De Venecia aide and Plan 747 author Romulo Neri.

De Venecia and Neri are making empty boasts in saying that their plan would eradicate absolute poverty in a matter of 10 years. Their hopes of achieving a 7% annual GNP growth beginning in 2003 is likewise miles away from reality.

Even the selected impact projects on Plan 747's list are impossible or exceedingly difficult to implement, such as planting a billion trees for commercial logging purposes in a span of seven to 12 years, or constructing 750,000 new houses in three years.

De Venecia admits that Plan 747's projects depend on huge loans from Japan and Europe. Even the IMF is worried that the hefty expenditures needed to implement Plan 747 will only further bloat the government and the country's deficit and indebtedness.

Even if some of the projects are implemented, the more remarkable result will be the further destruction of the country's forces of production.

Contrary to Neri's pronouncements that "Plan 747 will strengthen the supply side," the plan's espousal of further liberalization in agriculture, industry and services will only result in the massive entry of foreign companies and their monopoly of economic sectors hitherto limited to Filipinos, especially in agriculture and services, and the dumping of imported products. This will only result in further poverty and bankruptcy among the peasantry and local companies in the industrial and service sectors.

The main content of Plan 747 is the "modernization of agriculture" through the plantation-type cultivation of high-value crops such as cashew, asparagus, pepper and yams (*ube*) primarily for export. This will likewise involve the use of imported inputs like certified seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The cultivation of high-value crops will take the place of palay cultivation, thus resulting in the widespread conversion of many small ricefields into plantations geared for exports.

Instead of developing the economy, Plan 747 will only make it even more dependent on imports and exports and condemn it to backwardness. **[AB]**

Plan 747's fantastic content

- 1) "Modernizing agriculture" by planting high-value crops like cashew, asparagus, pepper and yams (*ube*) for export and reducing lands planted to rice;
- 2) Planting one billion commercial fast-growing trees that can be harvested by giant logging companies in five years;
- 3) Building 750,000 low-cost houses in three years to win over the urban poor and create thousands of transient employment in the stagnant construction sector;
- 4) Adopting an open skies policy so foreign airlines can fly in Philippine airspace;
- 5) Hyping grandiose and highly conspicuous projects in the export processing zones of Luzon in the hope of attracting foreign funding and aid;
- 6) Allowing local government units to enter into build-operate-transfer schemes with private companies up to the provincial level in order to benefit more foreign companies and corrupt government officials;
- 7) Sending 25,000 government scholars to the US, Europe and Japan to study science and technology, hoping they would impart their knowledge to the country even if there are no industries that could absorb them upon their return—if they ever come back at all.
- 8) Balancing the national budget from 2003 onwards even if the deficit for 2002 reached P223 billion and even if economists on the regime's payroll say that the deficit will neither be reduced nor wiped out in the next three years. **AB**

STATISTICS ON CRISIS

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime suffered a series of blows in the last half of last year. Macapagal-Arroyo was hard-pressed painting a rosy picture of the economy in the face of statistics starkly highlighting the worsening crisis in the Philippines:

Reduced foreign investments. Only P4.7 billion in investments came in during the third quarter of 2002. This represents an 81% decrease from last year's P25 billion level. Only portfolio investments increased, amounting to \$692 million (January-September 2002), up from \$208 million in 2001. Portfolio investments are geared only towards the purchase of government bonds—financial instruments that enable government to borrow from the public—and have no bearing on production or economic growth.

Unemployment. Unemployment grew to 10.2% from 9.8% last year. From July to October, more than 243,000 workers were laid off and could not find work. Conservative government estimates place the number of unemployed at 3.5 million. Another 4.6 million, on the other hand, are underemployed. Due to reduced foreign investments, only 17,000 new jobs were created by foreign companies, 37% lower compared to the 27,000 new jobs created last year.

Meanwhile, regular and contractual workers continue to be laid off due to a slump in production. Macapagal-Arroyo's plan of providing "one million jobs" has been shown to be an utter failure as it was revealed that only 60,000 new jobs were created in the agriculture sector.

Budget deficit. Estimates place the budget deficit for 2003 at P223 billion due to insufficient government income. This is 65% higher than the previous target of P130 billion.

Ballooning debts. Government debts continue to swell as interest payments increase. As of the latest calculation, government debts amount to P3.26 trillion (inclusive of the P535 billion guaranteed loans of private companies under the build-operate-transfer scheme), 17% higher than last year's figure. Paying the yearly minimum debt service of P411 billion alone is enough to cause the budget deficit to balloon in the next three to four years. **AB**

Foreign Direct Investments

<i>January-December (in millions of dollars)</i>	
2002 (Jan-Oct)	722
2001	1,186
2000	1,300
1999	737
1998	1,750
1997	1,250
1996	1,520

Source: *World Investment Report 2001 and National Statistical Coordination Board*

Lifesaver

As in previous years, the one thing that currently keeps the Philippine economy afloat are the dollar remittances of overseas Filipino workers (OFW).

In the first three quarters of 2002, OFW remittances reached \$5.37 billion (P280 billion), 21.2% higher compared to last year. This, despite the slack in remittances during the months of June, August and September due to wage reductions imposed in Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Korea. Foreign governments were able to impose wage cuts despite opposition from OFWs after conniving with the Department of Labor and Employment. For the year 2002, the regime expects to squeeze \$7.5 billion (P390 billion) from OFWs.

However, the number of Filipinos seeking employment abroad continues to grow due to the lack of job opportunities and the slave wages in the country. A growing number of them are nurses, caregivers, teachers, computer experts, technicians and other professionals and service workers drawn to Europe, America and Asia. From January to August alone, 612,358 Filipinos went abroad, 4% higher compared to last year's figure.

OFW remittances comprise 54% of the country's gross income from abroad. This is one of the main reasons for the existence of a balance of payments surplus of up to \$751 million despite the small growth in commodity trading (9.8%) and the 40.9% slump in services trading.

The dollar remittances of OFWs comprise the key factor in the growth of the gross national product (GNP). As a result, the economy posts an almost yearly growth rate despite the contraction of local industry and agriculture. More than 33% or P83 billion of OFW remittances goes to the government's coffers. This constitutes 6.2% of the GNP. **AB**

Year	Remittances	No. of new OCWs
	(in millions of dollars)	
2002 (Jan-Oct)	5,370	612,358 (Jan-Aug)
2001	6,500	866,590
2000	6,050	841,628
1999	6,794	837,020
1998	4,925	831,643
1997	5,741	747,696
1996	4,306	660,122

Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

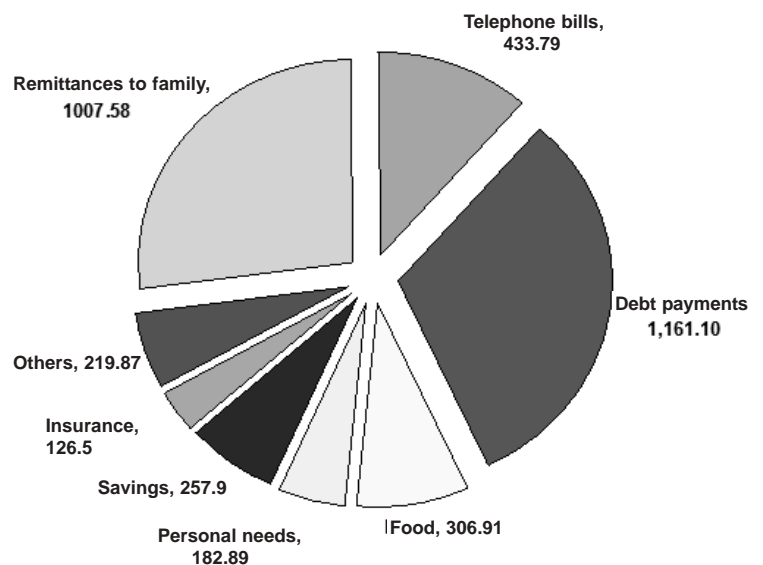
Life is hard for domestic workers in Hongkong

Domestic helpers in Hongkong hailing from the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Indonesia have been militantly opposing the Hongkong government's newest anti-worker scheme since November 2002. The Hongkong government plans to impose a HK\$500-750 tax (P3,250-P4,875 based on the P6.50=HK\$1 exchange rate) on the wages of domestic helpers. Last December, more than 5,000 domestic helpers belonging to 100 Asian migrant groups marched in the major streets of Hongkong. They promised bigger, more frequent and broader protests if the Hongkong government refuses to withdraw its plan. The protests were led by the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body and United Filipinos in Hongkong.

Domestic helpers are strongly opposed to the plan

see "DH", page 9

Where do HK domestic helpers' wages go?



Source: Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers

MACAPAGAL- ARROYO'S MANEUVERS TILL 2004 AND BEYOND

Macapagal-Arroyo's sudden and dramatic announcement that she is not running in the 2004 election is a desperate move designed to reverse her steeply declining popularity, avoid a humiliating defeat in the 2004 race and the possibility of being removed from power by a popular uprising even before this, and create a favorable political climate for the unbridled implementation of neoliberal economic policies and the all-out terrorist war.

She made the declaration a day after a hasty consultation with US Ambassador Richard Ricciardone, indicating the US' hand in the puppet president's maneuver.

The announcement was a quiet admission that this early, she has already lost the election. But this move, which represents a step backward, is a precursor to a plan to take two steps forward. She still desires to remain in power and, to this end, slyly keeps on changing the rules of the game of reactionary politics.

The puppet regime's drumbeaters are hoping for a sudden change of course. They want to seize the initiative and appease Macapagal-Arroyo's critics with her "politically ascendant" stance.

But Macapagal-Arroyo's current stance has had no impact on the intensifying rift among the factions of the ruling class in their bid to grab power in 2004 or earlier. Even within the ruling clique itself, there is intensified maneuvering and jockeying for initiative and leadership.

HOUSE SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA IS THE MOST active in making his maneuvers under the new situation. It is his proposals that offer Macapagal-Arroyo a generous fallback in the face of her increasingly difficult

position, pushing her to go for them. De

Venecia simultaneously proposed

changing the reactionary

constitution and the formation of a "government of national unity." To add weight to his proposal, de Venecia warned that they must be accepted to avert a coup d'etat.

The proposed charter change may either allow for an election in 2004 or do away with it altogether ("No Elections" or No-el) and have a transitional government in its place until 2007. Macapagal-Arroyo would remain president during the period to spare her from having to take her chances in the 2004 elections. Options regarding charter change are still open, even if the 2004 election does push through.

Although de Venecia does not explicitly express it, his ambition to be prime minister under a parliamentary system is evident in his proposal for charter change.

To secure the US' approval, the proposed charter changes provide for further imperialist domination of the Philippines and would allow foreigners to own land in the country.

The "government of national unity" proposes the inclusion in the cabinet of various political groups, including the opposition, "civil society" groups as well "groups from the Left, the Right and the secessionists," to form a broader base for, and prop up, the people's waning trust in the government.



see "2004", page 10

from "DH", page 8

as it would gobble up even more of the meager salaries they receive in exchange for the almost 24-hour, seven days-a-week services they render to Hongkong families. In a study conducted by the Mission for

Filipino Migrant workers (MFMW), an ordinary domestic helper receiving a gross salary of HK\$3,670 to HK\$4,119 spends 66% (P15,971) of this amount for her personal needs in Hongkong. (See chart.)

A domestic helper is able to

send only HK\$1,278.35/month (P8,307) or HK\$42.91/day (P278.90) to her family in the Philippines. This is minuscule compared to the more than P500/day or P15,000/month income needed by a family in the Philippines. **AB**



The Maynilad experience

THE ROTTENNESS OF THE PRIVATIZATION POLICY

Since the reactionary government sold the MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System) to Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) and Manila Water Company, Inc. (MWCI), the people have been plagued by successive water rate hikes. Despite the already huge increases in water rates, the companies are pressing for more.

The Maynilad experience has clearly unmasked the privatization scheme. Developments have refuted the reactionary government's grand promise that privatization would make water services cheaper and more efficient. Far from benefiting them, the privatization of water services has proved to be an added burden to the long impoverished people. Only a nationalized industry and service sector—run by a people's government that has no interest in amassing

profit for the benefit of a few—could provide honest and convenient social services.

Last December, Maynilad threatened to return its concession to the government if the latter rejects the company's petition for another water rate hike. The Macapagal-Arroyo regime is deathly afraid that widespread protests would erupt if it approves Maynilad's petition.

Maynilad has threatened to return its concession should its petition be rejected, claiming insufficient revenues. Maynilad is also demanding that the government refund its \$303 million investment.

WHEN MAYNILAD ACQUIRED ITS CONCESSION ON February 21, 1997, it assumed the bulk of the MWSS' \$800 million debt. As a result of the Asian financial disaster of 1997 which depreciated the peso from P26 to P52 to

see "Maynilad", page 11

"2004", from page 9

De Venecia endorsed Comrade Jose Ma. Sison to represent the Left, a proposal flatly rejected by Macapagal-Arroyo.

In any case, there should be a clear and principled basis of unity. There should also be substantial reform in the government's policies to make them acceptable and beneficial to the masses of the people. Without this, the participation of revolutionary leaders in a "government of national unity" would only give credence to the shaky Macapagal-Arroyo government and renewed impetus for the continuation and escalation of its puppet, repressive and rotten policies.

It would be fine if the proposed "government of national unity" were to pave the way for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. To achieve this, Macapagal-Arroyo must reverse her government's policies that run counter to the peace talks. Among others, she must rescind the all-out war against the NPA and the revolutionary mass base; withdraw the "terrorist" tag on the Party, NPA,

Comrade Sison and other revolutionary leaders and members of the NDFP peace panel; ratify and implement anew past agreements between the NDFP and GRP; discard the draft document of surrender that comes in the guise of a "single-process comprehensive peace package" and instead pursue serious discussions and efforts to achieve unity once again on the previously agreed upon four-point basic agenda on reforms for the people.

Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration that she is not running in the 2004 polls does not preclude the huge possibility that she would "change her mind" and retract her statement—based supposedly on the demands of the situation, of duty or of the people.

As long as Macapagal-Arroyo sits in Malacañang and no dramatic change in policy is effected for the benefit of the people, her declaration will only further heighten the crisis of the ruling system, and intensify protests and criticism of her extremely antinational, anti-democratic and antipeople policies and administration. **AB**

“Maynilad”, from page 10

the dollar, however, its debt increased from P20 billion to P50 billion.

In March 2001, Maynilad suspended the payment of concession fees to the MWSS supposedly to recoup its losses resulting from the peso devaluation. Since then, the MWSS has shouldered the debt payments, with the government borrowing funds from foreign banks for the purpose. Maynilad's unpaid concession fees to the MWSS have gone up to P5 billion. The reactionary government has turned its back on its obligation to pay the MWSS' debts, saying that Maynilad should assume the burden. Maynilad, however, has passed back the responsibility to the government for the debts that have since grown severalfold. The debts will be borne by none other than the people.

Added burden on the people

The privatization of the MWSS has brought nothing to the people but serial water rate increases. It has not delivered on its promise of lowering service rates.

The original contract prohibits the two concessionaires from arbitrarily hiking rates within 25 years. So in October 2001, the Macapagal-Arroyo government colluded with Maynilad and MWCI to amend the agreement and allow rate increases. Aside

from the basic charge, the only other charge Maynilad and Manila Water are allowed to collect is the currency exchange rate adjustment (CERA) fixed at a peso per cubic meter.

The agreement was amended ostensibly to allow the two companies to recover their losses due to the plunge of the peso. It is, however, clear that all the new charges are meant to ensure the biggest possible profit for the two companies. Contrary to the original 1997 contract which provided for a 25-year period for the companies to recover their investments, Maynilad and MWCI are trying hard to achieve this in five years.

The new agreement allows the two concessionaires to charge consumers the following: (1) accelerated-extraordinary price adjustment (AEPA); (2) foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA); and the (3) special transitory mechanism (STM).

Collection of the AEPA started in 2001 at P1 per cubic meter, which was incorporated into the basic charge. Maynilad collects an estimated P2.6 bilyon from the AEPA.

The FCDA is a mechanism for the automatic adjustment of charges based on fluctuations in the peso-dollar exchange rate. This is the same mechanism used by the NAPOCOR and the PLDT to pass on to consumers losses resulting from the fluctuating value of the peso. The FCDA automatic price adjustment comes on top of the CERA, which is pegged at a certain rate.

Collection of the FCDA began this year at 35.73% of the basic charge for Maynilad and 49.6% for MWCI.

The water companies started collecting the STM in July 2002. Aside from this, Maynilad collects several other charges (*see sample billing statement*). All of the added charges have no relation to water consumption.

In spite of the successive increases, Maynilad's services remain poor—the water is not always safe to drink, there is no assurance of a 24-hour water supply and almost every month, there are times when no water is available for days on end. There have also been many instances when Maynilad billed consumers who have already paid to subscribe to its services even if not a single drop of water has flowed from their faucets. **AB**

Maynilad Water Services			
Name: Jose de la Cruz			
Address:			
Account No. XXXX	Billed Consumption (cu. m)		
Property No. XXXX	Present Reading	705	
Meter No. XXXXXX	Previous Reading	663	
Rate Code: Residential (01)	Consumption	42	
Billing Scheme N	Bill Period	06 Nov - 07 Dec	
2002			
TOTAL CURRENT CHARGES			
Water/Sewer Charges			
Basic Charge	P	274.59	
CERA	42	Summary of Charges	
FCDA	21.71	-----	
Environmental charges	33.83	Current charges:	
411.54			
MSC	2.00		
VAT	37.50	Total Amount: 411.54	
Total	411.54		

Example of a Maynilad billing statement



STATE FASCISM

From the time Macapagal-Arroyo became president in January 2001 up to November 29, 2002, 1,545 cases of human rights violations have been recorded, according to KARAPATAN. Seventy percent (70%) of these were committed by the AFP, 13% by the PNP and the rest by goons, vigilantes and other groups.

Thus, at least 19 cases of human rights violations are committed weekly under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. An average of two "suspected terrorists" or "communist sympathizers" are killed every week. A hundred and sixty-seven (167) activists, mass leaders and suspected sympathizers of the revolutionary movement have already been killed within the period, of whom 30 were members of Bayan Muna, 22 were women and seven were children. Thirty-four (34) survived the attempts on their life while 16 remain missing.

Political detainees now number 314, two hundred and nine (209) or 66% of whom were imprisoned under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. The regime's "all-out war" has already displaced 17,000 families.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime's bloody record has been the subject of intense criticism. According to Party spokesman Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Macapagal-Arroyo has not only equalled Marcos in perpetrating terrorism and human rights violations. He said military abuses in Southern Tagalog today are far worse than during the Marcos dictatorship. "They are killing civilians," Ka Roger said. "And the civilians aren't simply killed. Some have been beheaded, and their body parts scattered in several places."

The latest case occurred on November 23-24 in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro. Four civilians were

see "Fascism", page 13

Broken promises

The current and previous regimes have been avid apostles of the privatization policy dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Ever since privatization went full throttle under the Aquino and Ramos regimes up to the Estrada and Macapagal-Arroyo regime's implementation of the policy, it has continuously plunged the Filipino people to unbearable depths of poverty.

Successive regimes have always claimed that privatization would benefit the people. Competition would supposedly lower the prices of commodities and improve service facilities. In fact, however, privatization's real objective is to cut down on or cut off government spending on social services in order to avoid budgetary deficits and channel the country's funds to debt servicing.

The US-Ramos regime enacted the Water Crisis Act in 1995 saying the MWSS is incapable of delivering efficient water services to Metro Manila. The MWSS is the world's largest water services company privatized.

Two companies acquired the MWSS—Maynilad Water Services covering western Metro Manila and several adjacent municipalities, and the Manila Water

Company, Inc. (MWCI) covering the eastern part.

Maynilad is 49% owned by the Lopezes' Benpres Holdings Corporation, 40% by the French multinational Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux and 1% by Metrobank. Manila Water, on the other hand, is 40% owned by the Ayalas. Its largest partners are Bechtel Overseas Corp., an American company and United Utilities Plc. of the United Kingdom.

At the onset, Maynilad offered to lower its rate to P4.97 per cubic meter while MWCI claimed it could lower its rate to P2.32 per cubic meter. The two companies hold 25-year government concessions.

MWSS workers vehemently protested the privatization of the company. Fifty-seven percent or 5,489 out of the company's 10,000 workers were laid off. The remaining 4,331 were subjected to "probation" while being gradually laid off for various reasons, including forced retirement. After a few months, only 1% of the entire workforce was retained as regular employees. **AB**



abducted and killed, including Anthony Martinez, a mass leader. Martinez's severed head and his body were found in separate barangays. Nine Mangyans were also abducted during this period.

Macapagal-Arroyo has bloodstained hands. She herself endorsed the murderous antipeople and counterrevolutionary campaign in the island when she visited Mindoro in mid-2001 and ordered the deployment of more troops to the island.

The different forms of human rights violations were condemned in the December 10 demonstration in Manila, where Macapagal-Arroyo's "strong republic" was assailed as meaning nothing but the further repression of the people's civil and democratic rights in the name of "anti-terrorism."

There has been no letup in state terrorism and human rights violations since the time of the Marcos dictatorship. According to Amnesty International (AI), "There exists a pattern of arrests, detention and torture reported by a wide range of political and criminal suspects, both then and now." It said that the pattern includes beating up suspects in the course of their arrest, often without warrant; depriving them of the right to counsel and to be visited by their physician and families during prolonged periods of incommunicado detention; and the use of force, including means that leave no traces, mainly to coerce suspects or name suspected conspirators.

AI is currently undertaking a campaign regarding the celebrated case of the "Abadilla 5"—five innocent men charged with the killing of Col. Rolando Abadilla, a notorious torturer and murderer under the Marcos dictatorship. Abadilla was killed in June 1996 by opportunist renegades led by Sergio Romero who use the name Alex Boncayao Brigade without authorization from the Party.

Despite repeated admissions by Romero's group and the presence of evidence proving the group did it, the PNP charged the "Abadilla 5" to get Romero's gang off the hook and come up with other "guilty persons." The five do not know Abadilla, did not have any link to him until they were implicated in the killing and investigators failed to come up with a motive or any possible mastermind for the crime. The "Abadilla 5" were severely tortured to make them confess to the killing. The court sentenced them to death, ignoring evidence that they were tortured.

In an interview by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, a vicious police official haughtily confirmed the common use of torture by the state. He added that the "Abadilla 5" were believably innocent and were only used as "fall guys".

Even the regime's Commission on Human Rights (CHR) admits that the Philippine government has failed in terms of compliance to the United Nations Convention Against Torture. According to CHR chair Purificacion Quisumbing, the government and the commission have failed to protect the people's human rights.

In the final analysis, the Macapagal-Arroyo government has not only failed. It is the very mastermind behind the cases of torture, murder, repression and other grave violations of human rights. **AB**

“Exemplary butcher”

When Macapagal-Arroyo awarded a medal to Col. Jovito Palparan on December 21, this drew a stark picture of the human rights situation in the Philippines.

Palparan is known as the "Butcher of Mindoro". As commander of the Philippine Army's 204th Brigade, Palparan is responsible for numerous cases of summary execution, abduction, torture, forced evacuation, harassment and other military abuses. Unarmed civilians are their primary victims. There were times when he himself committed such acts of violence, as in the cases of Juvy Magsino, vice mayor of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro; and Edu Paringit, a cameraman from Calapan City. Magsino, who was accused of supporting the New People's Army (NPA) and Paringit who was accused of being a Red fighter, were both harassed and threatened by Palparan.

Palparan was awarded a medal after being wounded in an NPA ambush on November 24 in Villaflores, Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro.

To honor Palparan is to honor his heinous record of brutality in the island. Under the present regime, Palparan serves as the model in launching the brutal terrorist war against the people and the revolutionary movement. **AB**

Rampant human rights violations against national minorities stun UN rapporteur

Violations of the rights of national minorities have become so severe the United Nations (UN) can no longer gloss over them. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, UN rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was stunned by the sorry plight of minority peoples at the hands of the reactionary government and armed forces. He likewise witnessed the widespread violation of their human rights. Stavenhagen arrived in the country on December 2 upon the invitation of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime.

Among the cases he noted are the grabbing of ancestral lands and forced recruitment into paramilitary groups.

In the report he prepared for the UN, Stavenhagen noted that pertinent laws hardly protect the ancestral lands of national minorities. Such laws are either taken for granted or outrightly violated by the government and big businesses. Laws pertaining to national minorities are riddled with loopholes, making it easy for big landlords and foreign businesses who grab their lands. He cited as an example the Mining Act of 1995 which devastates mainly the lands of national minorities.

Stavenhagen said the same of so-called development projects. Many communities are being displaced or forced to accept big projects such as dams, logging concessions, commercial plantations and mines which undermine their traditional economy



and livelihood, communal structure and cultural practices. The minorities are also victims of the pollution brought about by big companies, endangering their environment and health.

The violation of the human rights of national minorities by the AFP and paramilitary groups under it is widespread, added Stavenhagen. Among the cases on record are murder, detention, forcible evacuation, harassment and forced recruitment to the CAGU. Stavenhagen urged the Macapagal-Arroyo regime to pay attention to cases of summary execution, rape and forced enlistment into paramilitary groups especially under the "counter-insurgency" program.

Stavenhagen openly criticized government agencies, especially the Commission on Human Rights, for their negligence. He said the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples is likewise inutile.

see "UN Rapporteur", page 15

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES PROBE OF JOURNALISTS' DEATHS

Amnesty International (AI) has called for an investigation of the murder of three Filipino journalists. AI expressed concern over the violation of journalists' human rights in the Philippines.

AI wants to look into the deaths of Benjaline Hernandez, Edgar Damalerio and Sonny Alcantara. It also called for the protection of their families, friends and other people involved in the cases.

Hernandez headed the Mindanao chapter of the College Editors' Guild of the Philippines (CEGP)

when Army soldiers killed her in April 2002. She was then doing research about military abuses. Damalerio was a radio commentator and editor of a local newspaper in Zamboanga when a police officer shot him. According to the investigation, the police officer was angered by an article written by Damalerio about corruption. Alcantara was gunned down in August after he criticized a local official in San Pablo, Laguna. **AB**

"UN Rapporteur", from page 14

Striking cases of human rights violations against national minorities

In their meeting with Stavenhagen, the lumads in Southern Mindanao once more bewailed the grabbing of their lands and the attendant militarization. They are currently waging a struggle against the Philippine National Oil Company's geothermal plant project in Mt. Apo. On December 8, they affirmed their unity against escalating militarization in a *d'yandi* or blood compact against a common enemy. Such blood compacts are only held to decide on issues that greatly affect the various tribes. As far as they can remember, this is only the third *d'yandi*, the last having been forged on April 13, 1989 against the geothermal plant.

The lumads also assailed their forced recruitment into vigilante groups like the Alsa Lumad and Alamara (an affront to the Ata-Manobo term *alamara* which means "quest for justice.")

Due to such militarization, the lumads suffer from numerous cases of hamletting, food blockade, robbery and forced evacuation, among others. This year, up to 87 cases (625 victims) involving the violation of the lumads' human rights have been recorded.

In the Cordillera, Igorots expressed their vehement protest against the continuing construction of the San Roque Multipurpose Dam that has been destroying their fields and bringing about the militarization of their communities. Peasants from Mankayan, Benguet expressed their resistance to the 63-year old copper and gold mines in their area.

In Baguio City, the Ibaloi Cariño clan reiterated its longstanding petition to reclaim its ancestral land occupied by Camp John Hay, a former US military base. It was Mateo Cariño, the clan's patriarch, who first filed and won the case against the US government in 1909. The historic court decision, referred to as the Mateo Cariño Doctrine, was the world's first law recognizing the right of national minorities to their ancestral lands. The doctrine has been used as basis for cases filed by national minorities in Canada, the US and New Zealand to reclaim their ancestral lands. Ironically, the Cariños are still being deprived of their right to their land. **AB**

Critical video documentaries on the rise



Video documentaries that effectively show the people's true conditions, their grievances and resistance are on the rise. Most of them are being widely disseminated in video compact disk format. Many have clearly documented and exposed the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's brutality as well as the US and the puppet regime's collusion to trample on Philippine sovereignty and the rights of the Filipino people.

These documentaries have been shown before various people's gatherings in the cities and countryside, as well as in exhibitions in other countries. Due to their high quality and artistry, some of them have earned awards and widespread commendations from famous writers and art and movie critics.



One of the first in this genre is "Sa Liyab ng Sanlibong Sulo" produced by Asia Visions in 1997. It was a big help in mass education and propaganda efforts in the countryside and cities on Philippine history and

revolution. Following are other examples:

"Alingawngaw ng mga Punglo" by Southern Tagalog Exposure. This is a heart-rending documentary on military atrocities perpetrated mainly against the people of Southern Tagalog. Through interviews and presentation of evidence, it exposed the intense cruelty perpetrated against the masses and the military forces' heartlessness—in Mindoro, in other areas of Southern Tagalog and nationwide—under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime.

The documentary has earned much praise. According to *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist Recah Trinidad, it exposed the violence and one-

see "Video", page 16

"Video", from page 15

sidedness of the government's campaign to supposedly bring peace to the countryside. Trinidad described the military abuses shown in the documentary as "far worse" than the terrorism perpetrated by the Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

The documentary has also been exhibited in various prestigious film festivals and competitions. A version with English subtitles has been shown abroad.

"Ka Kano" produced also by Southern Tagalog Exposure. This is a 15-minute tribute to a Dumagat leader who was killed by the military in December 2001 in Antipolo, Rizal while preparing food for a mobilization commemorating International Human Rights Day. It was one of the entries to the Gawad Cultural Center of the Philippines Award for Short Experimental Film in 2002.

The single sentence that comprised the script and filled an entire minute of silence was highly effective—"Siya ay walang awang pinaslang ng mga elemento ng Task Force Panther ng AFP sa pamumuno ni Col. Laureano Tolentino noong Disyembre 8, 2001 sa Barangay San Jose, Antipolo, Rizal." (He was mercilessly killed by elements of the AFP's Task Force Panther led by Col. Laureano Tolentino on December 8, 2001 in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo, Rizal).

"Basilan: Siklab ng Digma" and **"Behind the Second Front,"** both by Kodao Productions. These two films centered on the very concrete and clear exposé of the actual events related to the conduct of "anti-terrorist" operations in Basilan, Sulu and Zamboanga: the collusion between the military and the Abu Sayyaf in kidnap-for-ransom incidents in Mindanao; the AFP's large-scale and intense violations of the Moro people's human rights; intervention by US military forces; the severe oppression of the Moro people; and their intense anger and growing resistance.

Through direct interviews with the victims, their families, witnesses to the violence, lawyers and human

rights advocates, the real developments are effectively shown to the people. In recording the stance and reactions of AFP officials, the film effectively exposes their fascist mindsets and arrogance, their disregard and their cruelty in the face of the suffering and oppression they have wrought on the people. In showing the ardent welcome for the International Solidarity Mission, democratic organizations and human rights advocates in the many areas they passed through, the film successfully imparted the people's high level of militancy.

The documentary confirmed many issues: Buyong-buyong Isnijal's courageous wife showed many pieces of evidence that it was an American soldier who shot Isnijal. Other witnesses also testified about plans to set up a structure that would be used as a military base by the Americans.

Aside from Metro Manila and other cities inside the country, "Basilan: Siklab ng Digma" has also been shown in Chicago, New York and Colorado in the US; in Montreal, Canada; and in Hongkong, among others.

"Ang Kaaway," also produced by Southern Tagalog Exposure, is a documentary that exposes and assails US military intervention in the Philippines.

It merely showed a series of film clips all culled from the news on television. The message becomes clear in the way the film clips were organized and

made to flow: from the statements and actions of US imperialism and the Macapagal-Arroyo regime and from opposing views, it becomes clear who the enemy is.

SHOWING audio-visual documentaries has been a tremendous help in providing education to and conducting propaganda for the broad masses, whether literate or not. The documentaries can be quickly and easily propagated at low cost among different numbers of viewers, and especially in big gatherings. The entire democratic and revolutionary mass movement should benefit more from such a quick, expansive and effective way of conducting education and propaganda for ever bigger numbers of people. **AB**





STRIKE ERUPTS AT PLDT

Members of the Manggagawa ng Komunikasyon sa Pilipinas (MKP) union of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) spent Christmas at the picketline as they kicked off a nationwide strike on December 2003. The MKP decide to push through with the strike when a deadlock stalled negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the union and the management which started on December 18. The workers had been holding different forms of protests since November.

The 6,700-strong MKP opposes the retrenchment of 550 telephone operators (most of whom are in the provinces) and the planned restructuring of the PLDT. MKP president Pete Pinlac said that sooner or later, restructuring would lead to the replacement of regular workers by contractuels.

BARRIOFOLK BARRICADE NAPOCOR PLANT

The Masinloc coal-fired plant of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) was forced to stop operations when residents, including barangay officials, of Barangay Bani, Masinloc, Zambales barricaded the plant.

The people demanded more damages for the destruction wrought by the NAPOCOR to their community. Two power generating units stopped operation as a result of the protest action. The NAPOCOR loses around P4.9 million daily due to the closure of the power generating units.

TRANSPORT STRIKE LAUNCHED IN CEBU, PANAY

Striking drivers, conductors and mechanics paralyzed transportation in Cebu City and Panay in December.

Almost 90% of transportation within and outside Cebu City was paralyzed by the strike launched by

drivers and operators belonging to the Transport Unity Forum on December 16. The organization, which comprises seven large drivers' associations, opposed the city's antidriver ordinances and traffic rules.

Meanwhile, in Panay, members of the Seventy Six Liners Drivers and Mechanics launched a strike to oppose management's violation of their CBA and attempts to bust their union.

In Luzon, workers of Philippine Rabbit Bus Line returned to work on December 21 after a 50-day strike. The union said that of their 10 demands, only two have yet to be met by management.

MALTREATMENT OF DEPORTEES ASSAILED

Migrante International condemned the maltreatment of 85 Filipino deportees by US Immigration authorities on December 14. According to Migrante, most of the deportees were handcuffed and chained while aboard a US plane. This is the second such incident, the first one being in June 2002 when 63 deportees from the US also arrived handcuffed and chained.

NEPALESE STUDENTS STAGE STRIKE

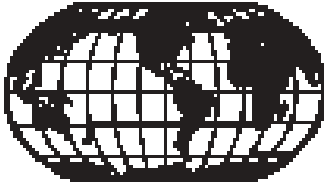
More than 500,000 students from 2,000 private and 2,000 public schools boycotted their classes in Kathmandu Valley in response to the five-day strike declared by the All Nepal National Free Students' Union-Revolutionary (ANNFS-R) from December 9 to 13.

The ANNFS-R called for the strike to assert the right to free education of everyone up to the age of 16 and demand lower tuition fees in private institutions. They also demanded that the government withdraw its terrorist tag on the ANNFS-R.

EU SUMMIT DENOUNCED

The closing of the European Union Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark on December 12 was met with protests from 5,000 rallyists. In a march on the city's streets, the demonstrators expressed their concern over the widespread poverty in the world and the looming US war on Iraq. Fifteen activists from France, Germany, Norway and Sweden were arrested by the police.





ILLEGAL ARRESTS IN ITALY CONDEMNED

Tens of thousands protested in different parts of Italy in December against the illegal arrest and repression of people who participated in the November 9 rally against the European Social Forum and the biggest antiwar demonstration in the country attended by one million people. Thirty thousand people staged a rally in Florence while 60,000 protested in Cosenza to press for the release of the political prisoners.

Forty-two people were arrested in 45 raids by Italian police between November 14 and December 14. Various charges were filed against those arrested, including production and possession of explosives, vandalism and disrespect for authority.

PROTESTS IN ARGENTINA GROWING

Tens of thousands of people launched a protest action from December 19 to 20 in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires against the economic crisis and to demand the ouster of the government.

Participants in the two-day protest march criticized both the past and present governments for the widespread hunger, poverty and unemployment in the country. They barricaded the streets and burned the flags of the United States and the United Kingdom to demonstrate their indignation over the policies of imperialist "globalization," saying such policies have brought about a severe financial crisis in the country.

They cited as an example the 70% devaluation of the Argentine peso vis a vis the dollar.

Anti-US protest actions spreading

South Korea. The Korean people reiterated their demand for the pullout of the 37,000 US troops in the country after a court acquitted two American soldiers who had run over and killed two Korean schoolgirls in June. The incident took place while the soldiers were holding a military training exercise.

The Korean people held protest rallies almost daily. On December 15, around 100,000 protested in Seoul and over 4,000 staged rallies in 61 cities and towns. Protests erupted again on December 21, a week after the election of South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun. Formerly taking a militant anti-US stand, Roh now favors the policies of US President George Bush.

Germany. The people's opposition to the existence of US military bases in this country is likewise gaining strength. On December 14, they held a rally in front of the Spangdaheim Air Base and other US bases

in Ramstein and Rhein-Mane, calling on the German government to be firm in its opposition to US war plans against Iraq. They averred that the use of the US military bases and German airspace in the planned attack on Iraq should not be allowed. The protest actions were launched despite the very cold winter.

United States. Hollywood actors launched the "Artists Say Win Without War" movement against the planned attacks on Iraq. Activist and award-winning actor Martin Sheen said they were against the Bush government's plan to launch a "preemptive military strike" on Iraq. In this regard, actor Sean Penn visited Iraq on December 14. In a speech, Penn told Iraqis that military aggression would undermine peace and security not only in the Persian Gulf states but in the whole world.